

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 313

October 6, 1999, 12:30 p.m.
Page S-12069 Temp. Record

LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION/Spending Cuts if Budget Exceeded

SUBJECT: Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000 . . . S. 1650. Nickles amendment No. 1889 to the Nickles amendment No. 1851.

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 54-46

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1650, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide \$324.2 billion in new budget authority, which is \$22.531 billion more than provided in fiscal year (FY) 1999 and is \$911.0 million less than requested. This amount includes advance discretionary and mandatory appropriations and \$9.902 billion in spending from trust funds. Budget authority for fiscal year 2000 discretionary spending will total \$84.018 billion.

The Nickles amendment would express the sense of the Senate that Congress should ensure that the fiscal year 2000 appropriations measures do not result in an on-budget deficit (excluding the surpluses generated by the Social Security trust funds) by adopting an across-the-board reduction in all discretionary appropriations sufficient to eliminate such deficit if necessary. The amendment would also make 2 findings: Congress and the President should balance the budget excluding the surpluses generated by the Social Security trust funds; and Social Security surpluses should only be used for Social Security reform or to reduce the debt held by the public and should not be spent on other programs.

The Nickles perfecting amendment to the Nickles amendment would strike all after the first word and substitute language that would have the same effect.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

Democrats have been putting huge pressure on Republicans to increase spending. On this bill alone, despite the large increases in funding that already will be provided, they have proposed a series of amendments demanding billions of dollars of more money,

(See other side)

YEAS (54)			NAYS (46)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (54 or 98%)		Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (1 or 2%)	Democrats (45 or 100%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms		McCain	Akaka	Kennedy		
Allard	Hutchinson			Baucus	Kerrey		
Ashcroft	Hutchison			Bayh	Kerry		
Bennett	Inhofe			Biden	Kohl		
Bond	Jeffords			Bingaman	Landrieu		
Brownback	Kyl			Boxer	Lautenberg		
Bunning	Lott			Breaux	Leahy		
Burns	Lugar			Bryan	Levin		
Campbell	Mack			Byrd	Lieberman		
Chafee	McConnell			Cleland	Lincoln		
Cochran	Murkowski			Conrad	Mikulski		
Collins	Nickles			Daschle	Moynihan		
Coverdell	Roberts			Dodd	Murray		
Craig	Roth			Dorgan	Reed		
Crapo	Santorum			Durbin	Reid		
DeWine	Sessions			Edwards	Robb		
Domenici	Shelby			Feingold	Rockefeller		
Enzi	Smith, Bob (I)			Feinstein	Sarbanes		
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon			Graham	Schumer		
Frist	Snowe			Harkin	Torricelli		
Gorton	Specter			Hollings	Wellstone		
Gramm	Stevens			Inouye	Wyden		
Grams	Thomas			Johnson			
Grassley	Thompson						
Gregg	Thurmond						
Hagel	Voinovich						
Hatch	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

more money, more money. They irresponsibly fail to say where all of that money will come from. At the same time as they say that the new money that Republicans have agreed to is not enough, they criticize Republicans for agreeing to spend as much as they have, saying that those increases will use up all of the on-budget surplus and part of the Social Security surplus. In making that charge, they have thrown around a lot of speculative numbers as if they were fact. With complete assurance they started this debate by saying that we will definitely spend 5 percent of FY 2000's Social Security surplus, and they have finished it by saying with just as much conviction that we will most assuredly spend at least 10 percent. If the debate lasted long enough, their rhetorical flourishes might get them all the way up to 100 percent.

Democrats came up with their 5-percent estimate by suggesting that Republicans are using budget "gimmicks" to hide spending and that when all is said and done those gimmicks will not prevent outlays that will dip into the Social Security surplus. It is a rather interesting charge, because the "gimmick" that has been employed by Republicans is to use Democratic budget estimates. The Congressional Budget Office's (CBO's) spending estimates on several bills were higher than the estimates from the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Republicans had CBO reconcile the differences by adopting the OMB's numbers. Our colleagues are basically accusing the Administration of having gimmick numbers. Republicans, and Democrats, on a bipartisan basis have also extensively used another funding mechanism in this year's appropriations bills that is often criticized as a gimmick. That mechanism is advance appropriations. However, we note that advance appropriations for future years do not allow spending outside of the caps. Thus, though many of us have strong reservations about the advisability of approving such appropriations in most circumstances, we also understand that we are not breaking the budget by approving them.

Senators need to keep in mind that there is very little difference in the CBO and OMB estimates. We have a \$1.8 trillion budget, and the spending estimates between the two forecasters are only about 1 percent off from each other. Further, the deficit and surplus projections are based on estimates of receipts. When the CBO reestimates receipts in January, it very well may find that they will be higher than expected and that we will therefore have a larger surplus than anticipated. Similarly, we could end up with a smaller surplus than anticipated. Right now, based on current estimates, we believe that we are, at most, \$5 billion over budget on our \$1.8 trillion budget. By any fair calculation that is cutting it pretty close. It is so close that we will not know for a few months whether we have gone a little over or a little under budget. To say that we have gone 5 percent or 10 percent over, though, is just nonsense.

The reason our Democratic colleagues have engaged in such hyperbole is that they are fearful of the proposition put forward by the Nickles amendment. That proposition is that if it turns out that this year's spending bills have gone a little over budget, instead of letting the difference come out of Social Security Congress ought to cut back spending across the board to get rid of the excess. The cut would come out of all the discretionary spending (which is not mandated by law). That spending is approximately \$500 billion. Thus, a \$5 billion cut would take about 1 percent out of every Federal program. Yes, every program would have to be reduced, but that proposition is better than allowing the Social Security surplus to be spent.

Our Democratic colleagues are calling our across-the-board cut, or sequester, a gimmick because they hope to defeat it with that rhetoric. In response, if it really were a gimmick, we think we would have their enthusiastic support. It is precisely because they know that it would work that they oppose it. Our Democratic colleagues would prefer to raise taxes instead; they have already indicated to us that they will propose an amendment to that effect after the vote on this amendment. We do not. If we spend too much we believe we should cut spending rather than increasing taxes. The choices being offered by the two parties are clearly drawn. We urge our colleagues to support the Nickles amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

Right now, in this debate, Republican Senators are using mix-and-match budget estimates from two sets of books, one from the CBO and one from the OMB. They have just picked the numbers they like best from each proposal. If they just stuck with CBO's original numbers they would find that they have already overspent the budget by so much that to get back into balance by cutting discretionary spending a 5-percent cut would be needed. Our Republican colleagues are floundering. They have pushed a bunch of appropriations bills that will spend much more money than is available. To pay for that extra spending, they will have to dip into the Social Security surplus, cut other spending, or find revenue offsets. They have been trying to hide how much they have been spending with a bunch of budget gimmicks. Newspapers recently reported that some Republican Members wanted to go to a 13-month budget; what would we call the new month? Debtuary? Abracadember? On the House side, an earned income credit proposal was floated that was so bad that the leading Republican candidate for President accused the House of trying to balance the budget on the backs of the poor. If we continue on the present spending path, we will not be a bit surprised if a 10-percent or more cut will be needed if we decide to cut spending to get back into balance. Do our colleagues really think we should cut education, Head Start, law enforcement programs, and all other Federal programs by 10 percent? We certainly do not. If necessary, we are ready to raise new revenues by closing special interest loopholes. Even Republicans admit that such loopholes exist--they proposed closing several of them as part of their tax cut bill they passed earlier this year (which the President wisely vetoed). The Nickles amendment proposes a solution that we know will never be enacted. Members are not going to allow a 10-percent cut in all discretionary spending. We urge our colleagues to oppose this amendment.